

Southeast Tornado MAT

Daily Report

Wednesday, 11MAY2011

OVERVIEW:

The three field teams for the MAT deployed to the following areas: Cordova and Cullman, Alabama; Arab Alabama and Dunlap, Tennessee ; Northeastern Mississippi (Smithville); and Huntsville, Alabama. The map at the end denotes where the teams traveled. Notable findings from the teams are provided below.

OBSERVATIONS:

Cordova, Alabama

Cordova was a small, rural community that was impacted by two tornadoes on April 27th. The first tornado struck early in the morning damaging the fire station and heavily impacting the historic district of downtown Cordova (this also knocked out the town's tornado warning siren). In the evening, the second tornado impacted the city, with the second path crossing the first just to the west of Main Street in downtown Cordova. The existing Police Station and the new building being renovated to become the new police station were damaged and the downtown was impacted for a second time. Most residents took shelter in their homes and several took refuge in the basement of the local church.

Cullman, Alabama

The team investigated damage to several churches, the County Courthouse, and several damage neighborhoods. Some residents took refuge in the basement of the courthouse which is opened to the public to serve as a "community shelter" during high wind events. There were several dozen residents from the town that sheltered in the courthouse. The courthouse sustained damage from windborne debris and lost a "false roof" that was installed approx. 10 years ago to protect the facility from normal weather. The structural roof did not experience damage from the event.

Most residents took refuge in their basements and no safe rooms were identified within the city. The County EMA was able to respond to the disaster from a new facility (constructed in 2009). This facility was constructed in the basement of the new water department building constructed on the south end of town (not impacted by the tornado). The EMA portion of the facility (including the housing for the generator) was constructed to the criteria of FEMA 361 to provide protection for EMA.

Arab Alabama and Dunlap, Tennessee

Objective: Today team 2 investigated multiple sites along tornado paths in Dunlap and Arab. The following sites were investigated:

1. Dunlop Police Department(Dunlap, TN)
2. Arab Police Department (Arab, AL)
3. Telecommunications Commercial Building (Arab, AL)

Dunlop Police Department: During an interview with the police department the following information was found: Some manufactured home residents evacuated to the north valley medical center. This medical center has no emergency room or 24-hour medical service. The Dunlop fire station is the rally point for the community. The damage in Dunlop was primarily limited to residential.

Arab Police Department: During an interview with the police department the following information was found: The Arab police department maintained a continuity of operations through a backup generator during the severe storm event. The jail cells could be used as a shelter. A portion of the offices, specifically a closet in the office was used as a shelter. A concrete slab is located above part of the offices in this building.

Telecommunications Commercial Building: During an interview with the telecommunications building, the following information was found: Approximately 240 people were sheltered within the telecommunications building. They were told to shelter in the middle of building where two large conference rooms, hallways and restrooms are located. The storm pulled back a portion of the roof membrane, damaged glazing in two windows, and damaged a porch overhang. The building lost two of eight AC units, which were located on the roof. There was no official plan for recovery; however the company had existing agreements with contractors to restore water, power, store materials, damage repairs. Due to the company's emergency management preparations, the expected downtime was estimated to be just 60 days.

Huntsville and Athens, Alabama

Objective: Team three's objective for May 11th was to assess damage in the Huntsville, AL, and Athens, AL areas. The team also spoke with Huntsville EMA officials and get a more accurate picture of the damage sustained by the community and the response following the storm.

Agenda:

1. 165 Placid Drive
2. 155 Placid Drive
3. 205 Silver Breeze Court – NSSA shelter – no one available to meet us
4. Manufactured Home #1
5. Manufactured Home #2
6. Athens shelter
7. NSSH Shelter 124 Holbrook Drive
8. NSSH Shelter 9 Battery St
9. Personal Shelter 23 Beck Street

Summary: Team three was able to meet with the Huntsville EMA regarding the damage in the area. The city of Huntsville did not have significant damage, but several of the surrounding towns and neighborhoods did. In the town of Harvest, AL, which is NW of Huntsville, a neighborhood of newer homes (5-10 years old) was in the path of the tornado and had several homes that were badly damaged.

The group then traveled along the damage path to a neighborhood of manufactured homes. Two homes were observed, one with skirting damage only and one that had been lifted off of its foundation and moved approximately 30-40 feet.

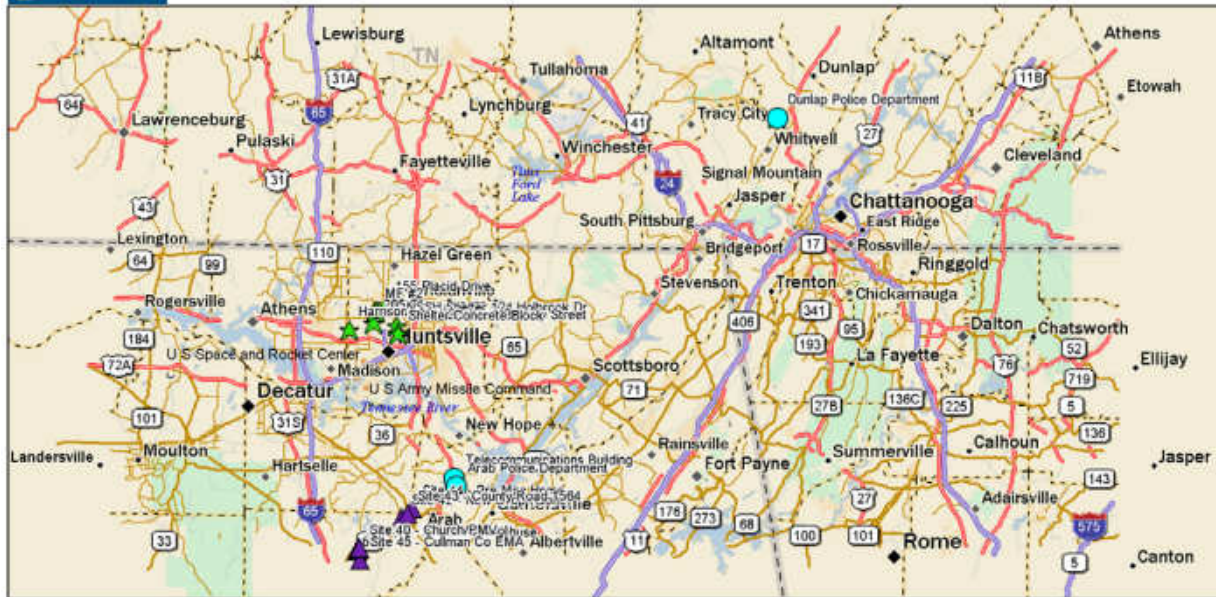
Following the manufactured homes we visited Athens, AL. The town suffered damage to several residential neighborhoods. One family in particular was photographed and highlighted in the news reports – the Harrison family in Athens, AL. We were able to located and photograph their safe room, which was built into their garage and was in the direct path of the storm. In addition, the team was able to visit several NSSA approved safe rooms.



NSSA Tested/Approved Safe Room in Huntsville, AL



The Harrison Family Safe Room



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Data Zoom 6-4

Map showing site locations of MAT field team visits on May 11, 2011. Sites include Cordova and Cullman (triangles), Arab and Dunlap, TN (circles), and Athens and Huntsville (stars).